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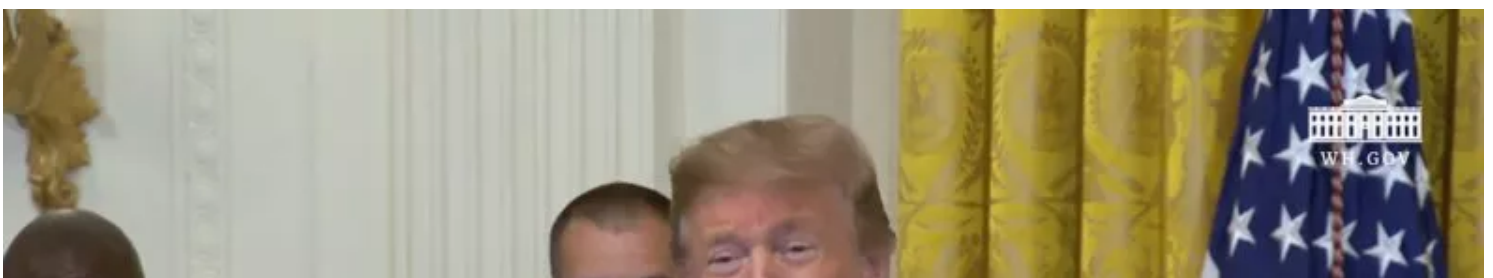
Exclusive: Jared Kushner Gets Candid About Struggling Trump Campaign, Mideast Peace, More

BY **BILL POWELL** ON 07/20/20 AT 5:00 AM EDT



Kushner seen here, in the White House press briefing room in April, is his father-in-law Donald Trump's most trusted adviser.

WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY





NEWS

DONALD TRUMP

2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

JARED KUSHNER

IVANKA TRUMP

Why would somebody 37 years old, with no diplomatic experience, take on the job of making peace in the Mideast? "My father-in-law asked me to do it," Jared Kushner says.

Never mind that Henry Kissinger, James Baker and Bill Clinton, among others, failed to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. President Donald Trump told Kushner to get it done, so that's what Kushner set out to do. He spoke to experts and negotiators from previous administrations. One was Aaron David Miller, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. When

Kushner told him what he was up to, a dumbfounded Miller spoke for sons-in-law everywhere: "Wow, I wish my father-in-law had the kind of faith in me that yours has in you!"

When the history of Donald Trump's tumultuous time in the White House is written—and that may be sooner than later—it will show one thing for certain: His most influential adviser, by far, was Jared Kushner. Now 39, Kushner has been a *de facto* chief of staff, influencing the hiring and firing senior White House aides; an important architect of Trump's foreign policy, including the map of the Mideast and the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement; he became a key member of the coronavirus task force; the prime force behind initiatives like criminal justice reform; and now, increasingly, a critical adviser to a struggling re-election campaign. He is, in fact, the most influential presidential relative—first ladies aside—since Robert F. Kennedy served as attorney general for his brother, President John F. Kennedy.

Kushner differs far more from Trump than the intense RFK did from his elder brother, known more for his cool reserve. Trump and Kushner are in many ways an odd pairing. He is reserved, thoughtful and disciplined (traits no one associates with Trump). Trump is bombastically bumptious. Kushner is quietly sure of himself. He does his homework. He reaches out for different points of

view—including to Democrats. And though criticism comes his way, and it frustrates him and his friends, he doesn't vent about it in public or seem to feel sorry for himself in private.

The RFK analogy is not a reach. As with Bobby Kennedy, Kushner has been portrayed by much of the press as an entitled rich guy who lacks the proper experience for the job he's been given, who got to where he is only because of nepotism. Or, as his friend Adam Boehler, whom Kushner brought in to work on the coronavirus response in March, puts it, "The myth of the son-in-law who hasn't earned it."

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IN THE MAGAZINE



COVER NEWS

Kushner Says 'We Were Playing with Live Ammo' After Trump Was Elected



Rashida Tlaib's Tough Primary Race Tests the Squad's Strength

It's true that Kushner had no government or political experience before coming to Washington (though he did run his family's large real estate company). "He and his wife [Ivanka] aren't even basically qualified for the sensitive positions

they hold on the White House payroll," wrote one outraged *Washington Post* reader after a columnist dared to say something nice about Kushner in print. The view that his power and influence in the Trump White House is the product of nepotism is accurate—as far as it goes. RFK got precisely the same heat nearly six decades ago.

The criticism, Kushner insists, doesn't bother him. His role as Senior Adviser to the President—his official White House title—is, in his view, straightforward: "I'm a utility player," Kushner tells *Newsweek*. "I can give [Trump] a point of view on the severity of a given problem, I can give him some diagnoses and a prescription."

On issues as different as the Mideast and criminal justice reform, his approach is similar: Ask experts, study previous efforts—and then do something different. "The thing that guided me was, I didn't want to do what had failed in the past," he says. That willingness to blow things up is a technique he shares with Trump. "The president's very good at eliminating the status quo," he says.

Sarah Ferguson writes Mills & Boon romance novel based on her own life

107K

How interesting would a novel based on your life be to read?

- ☐ Very interesting
- ☐ Somewhat interesting
- ☐ Only a little interesting
- ☐ Not interesting at all

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Unlike his father-in-law, though, Kushner seems a pragmatist more than a political animal, proud of being someone who simply gets things done. "Take the Wall," he says. "This isn't what I came to do. But [John] Kelly and [Kirstjen] Nielsen failed. And by the end of this year we'll have over 450 miles built... I feel I've been able to take on challenges, I feel like I know Washington better and I've been effective... I have the ability to build relationships and have trusted dialogues, and the president knows they won't leak." As Anthony Scaramucci, who served briefly as White House Communications Director and has known Trump for years has put it: "loyalty is the president's bottom line."

If filial devotion were all that mattered, though, Eric Trump would be senior adviser. So it's fair to assume that Kushner brings something else to the job. What, more than three years in, has he accomplished? Has he been bouncing from one important issue to another, diving into things he doesn't really understand? Why did he take on the issues that he did? And what, at the end of the day, does he think about the fact that for all his efforts, President Trump may

well lose an election that six months ago his team was supremely confident of winning?

For this article, *Newsweek* interviewed Kushner twice at length—by phone because of the pandemic—as well as dozens of people inside and outside the White House, to examine how he's handled the most important, high-profile assignments he's taken on. What we found doesn't always jibe with the caricature of the entitled failure. There have been failures, to be sure. But there also have been some successes, and efforts that fall somewhere in between. And through it all, he has been loyal. Here are a few of the notable projects he's worked on, and how he and others see the results.



Kushner and others wear face masks while attending a press briefing about coronavirus testing in the Rose Garden of the White House on May 11, 2020 in Washington, DC.

DREW ANGERER/GETTY

The Pandemic

Kushner had hoped—believed, actually—that by now the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic would be behind the nation, "that by July we'd be rocking again as a country," as he put it in a mid-June interview. That hasn't happened: even as the virus has receded everywhere from east Asia to western Europe, cases are soaring in the United States. In late June and early July, Kushner was more involved in the re-election campaign, particularly after the president's poorly attended rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on June 20. He conferred more frequently with campaign manager Brad Parscale (an ominous sign: amid worsening poll numbers, Parscale was demoted and replaced on July 15). Kushner, aides say, has also been trying to get the president to focus more consistently on the campaign. But as the number of virus cases rises, he's been drawn back in, fielding frequent phone calls from governors who in many cases now need more PPE and medical personnel.

The coronavirus crisis showcases both the president's reliance on his son-in-law and Kushner's *modus operandi*. In early March, it was clear that the virus, which Trump downplayed for weeks, was spreading. It had seeded far more widely on

both East and West coasts than the administration understood. Kushner met in the Oval Office with Trump and other advisers to thrash out a decision on shutting down travel from Europe. As the meeting ended Trump asked Kushner to wait. "He then asked me to drop everything I was doing and work with Vice President Pence on the coronavirus task force," Kushner says.

Kushner's status as a family member would often irk senior administration officials. But the standard jealousy receded a bit, according to multiple sources, because of the magnitude of the crisis. Says Kushner: "The gap was quite great between what we needed to do versus what we were doing...I attribute it to the fact that [the virus outbreak] was unprecedented. It was as if we were standing on a beach watching a tsunami coming. There were some very, very dark and daunting days. I didn't always feel necessarily that we would meet the challenge."

With Pence's approval, he focused on three key areas—PPE supplies, ventilator production and testing—all of which were huge problems and showed just how unprepared the U.S. was for the crisis. He recruited his friend Boehler, a former health care executive whom Trump had put in charge of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation in 2018. Boehler in turn asked health care entrepreneur Brad Smith, an executive at insurance giant Anthem, to join. They

brought in several Wall Street and private equity executives to work on the three key issues.

Critics questioned why a bunch of relatively young health care and finance types—the junior varsity, in other words—was suddenly in the middle of things that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) would normally handle. But press reports about general chaos brought on by Team Kushner were overwrought, Kushner's people insist. They say the stories of crossed wires between agencies were exaggerated, and that the people they brought in had the skills and industry contacts—the "big Rolodex," as Kushner says—to help in a crisis.

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-

Take testing. Kushner, Boehler and Smith rounded up private sector companies such as Walmart and CVS to participate in setting up drive-through sites. "I never really had a problem working with Jared's team," says Admiral Brett

Giroir, an assistant secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services and a physician who was in charge of deciding where the sites should go and setting them up.

Still, when Trump announced the plan in the Rose Garden on March 13, it was widely derided. The announcement was premature, to be sure. The companies were nowhere near ready. But Boehler says there are now more than 3,000 of the drive-through testing sites, and overall testing now approaches 700,000 per day, compared to less than 15,000 per day in mid-March. The administration still insists one million tests per day will be available by the fall, but lines are lengthening for tests now in hot spots as demand surges. And the administration also didn't anticipate the lags in processing test results that are now hampering efforts to do effective contact tracing.

Kushner's crew faced the same criticism in its hunt for PPE: that he brought in cronies not suited to the task. That's wrong, Boehler insists, saying Kushner's team played an important role in finding supplies. "There are thousands and thousands of offers coming in at crazy prices from random traders in China," Boehler says. "You don't know what's real and what's not. People who source deals for investment firms, like the people we brought in, go through offers and tee them up for senior people." Look at the net results, he says: "we got the PPE, and we didn't get defrauded."

Kushner was effective at negotiating. For example, he got involved in a dispute between the government of China and U.S. multinational 3M, which manufactured masks at a factory in Shanghai at a rate of 50 million a month. The Shanghai government had temporarily taken control of the factory. The U.S. needed masks, the sprawling health bureaucracy was ill-suited to figure out how to make that happen quickly, and U.S.-Sino ties were deteriorating rapidly. Kushner called Cui Tiankai, China's ambassador to Washington, and told him, "This is a time when a lot of people are saying a lot of things. If we can't get masks from the 3M plant in Shanghai this will not play well [with the American public]." Twelve hours later, Kushner says, his team had a deal with 3M.

Meanwhile, Kushner worked closely with Dr. Deborah Birx of the White House COVID-19 task force, to prevent a crisis in ventilators.

Some state governors, most notably New York's Andrew Cuomo, feared they wouldn't have enough machines to prevent mass casualties. The White House shared the concern. A senior official says one internal estimate showed that the U.S. might need 130,000 new ventilators by May 1. At the time the Centers for Disease Control's Strategic National Stockpile had between 12,000 to 13,000 ventilators. Kushner helped persuade Trump to invoke the Defense Production Act in April to kickstart more production. His team worked with the six companies involved in manufacturing, and Kushner got on the phone with governors.

"We tried to force discipline on them," he says. "How many [ventilators] do you have, what's your utilization rate? Some governors were quite competent, other governors literally didn't know how many they had."

Kushner says he had a good working relationship with Cuomo, and quickly came to share the governor's view that ventilators didn't need to be supplied throughout the country simultaneously. They needed to go to hot spots, like New York—and then sent elsewhere once the need dissipated. That is what the White House strategy became, and Cuomo praised Kushner for it. It is fair to say Kushner played a role in averting what could have been a ventilator crisis.

By early summer, after three months of frantic work, Team Kushner thought the worst was behind them. But as COVID-19 cases spike in states including Texas, Florida, Arizona and California, spot shortages of PPE are flaring, according to the American Medical Association. In Fort Worth, Texas, Kathryn Mandal, a physician at Continuum Pediatrics, says her office was just able to order a box of protective gloves for the first time in a month, and they paid five times what they used to pay pre-COVID-19. Kushner's team and HHS say that PPE supply chains should be able to withstand the current increases in cases. But it's clear that premature economic reopenings—urged by Trump, who downplayed the importance of mask-wearing while insisting "we've got to get the country open again"—contributed to the surge, undercutting Kushner's efforts.

The resurgence now might lay waste to Kushner's summer plans. Instead of focusing solely on his father-in-law's floundering re-election campaign, he is finding himself in the medical supplies business again.



Kushner's interest in criminal justice reform grew after father Charles went to prison in 2004; here, the two at a 2012 event for Ivanka Trump's fashion line.

PATRICK MCMULLAN/PATRICK MCMULLAN/GETTY

Prisons

Criminal justice reform is not an issue associated with Republicans. But few in Washington were surprised when Jared Kushner took it up in early 2018. After all, the whispers about the politics of Kushner and his wife, Ivanka Trump, have been consistent: "You know, they're really New York liberals." Although the couple had donated to Democratic candidates in the past, Kushner disputes these characterizations. Instead, this is an issue he's passionate about for personal reasons. The passage of the First Step Act, as the reform legislation was known, is Kushner's clearest success to date.

In 2004, Kushner's father, Charles, was convicted of federal election law violations, tax evasion and witness tampering. He cut a plea deal with then-New Jersey U.S. Attorney Chris Christie, and was shipped off to a federal prison in Montgomery, Alabama. (He served 14 months before being sent to a halfway house.) While visiting his father in prison, Jared Kushner says, "I met a lot of good people who didn't have the same chances that I had, that my father had. That really struck me. It was something that I knew intellectually, but to meet people who were good people who had just made one mistake, it hit home. People need a second chance."

His first task was to convince Trump. Kushner says he walked the president through the numbers, showing, for example, that without training and education

programs in prison, recidivism rates are higher. "What are these people going to do when they get out?" Kushner says. "They are going to commit crimes." He also showed his father-in-law how many people—particularly young African American men—were in jail because of minor drug offenses. Trump gave the okay to push for legislation.

Kushner began working with a bipartisan group in both the House and Senate. There were skeptics, of course, like Arkansas Republican Senator Tom Cotton. "They thought we were just all about letting murderers and rapists out of prison. It wasn't true," Kushner says. He never got Senator Cotton's support—the senator thought the bill would make Trump look soft on crime—but Kushner did gain a key ally: former Obama administration official and CNN commentator Van Jones, who had started #cut50, which was billed as a bipartisan organization aimed at pursuing criminal justice reform.

In 2018, Kushner invited Jones and organization co-founder Jessica Jackson to the White House. "I was very skeptical," says Jackson. But when Jackson heard Kushner speak about his father, she sympathized: when she was 22, her then-husband was convicted on a drug charge. "They threw him in a cage for three and a half years," she says. Hearing Kushner out, she became convinced "he was in it for the right reasons." She and Jones agreed to work with Kushner

"though we were doubtful he would get it done, even if his heart was in the right place."

The Jones/Jackson endorsement showed Democrats that Kushner might be serious. Jackson acknowledges that she and Jones took some grief. "People were calling us saying, how could you do this, how can you do something that might give Trump a win?"

Kushner set about working his right flank. He says he called "Hannity [Fox News' Sean] and Laura [Ingraham] and [radio host] Mark Levin" to promote the bill. Another conservative skeptic, radio chat show host Hugh Hewitt, got three phone calls to go over details. In the end Kushner got an initially skeptical Mitch McConnell, the Senate Majority leader, to schedule a floor vote. At Kushner's urging, Trump had lobbied McConnell himself. The Kentucky senator not only scheduled the vote, he supported the legislation. "Jared was persistent, worked the issue hard, and persuaded me of the bill's merits," McConnell told *Newsweek*.

On December 18, 2018, the Senate passed the First Step Act, 87-12; the House followed and Trump signed. The bill discharged thousands of prisoners from federal jails—including first-time offenders—relocated thousands more to

prisons closer to their families, got rid of the "three strike" rule mandating life in prison for a third conviction and increased funding for in-prison education.

"After it passed I met Matthew Charles, one of the first guys let out of prison under the bill," Kushner says. "Hearing his story when he came by my office, it was like having a shot of espresso."

Says Jackson: "Everything [Kushner] said he would do, he did. Van and I still sort of shake our heads about that."

By all accounts Trump was serious about trying to boost his share of the Black vote from 8 percent in 2016 to 13 percent or more in 2020. His campaign believed, pre-COVID-19, that the record low unemployment rate among Black Americans (5.5 percent in December), plus rising wages, plus the criminal justice bill would give him a case to make.

Now, of course, that hope is largely gone. The deep pandemic-driven recession has driven Black unemployment back up to 16.7 percent, and the killing of George Floyd by police has prompted widespread outrage and social unrest. Trump's law-and-order rallying cries and support for Confederate symbols don't help.

Asked if he still thought his father-in-law could increase his share of the African American vote, Kushner says, "Maybe. Maybe not."



Kushner, with Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, listens as Trump and Netanyahu talk in the Oval Office earlier this year.

JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY

Peacemaking

Succeeding in a bitterly divided Washington is hard enough, and then there's the Mideast. Kushner says his effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was done in good faith—that it was not a plan designed to provoke Palestinian intransigence so that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a longtime Kushner family friend, could do whatever he wanted on the West Bank.

"I understand that people are going to criticize," he says. But "it's okay to take on hard challenges. I'd rather spend time on harder things."

Kushner went about the task with his characteristic mix of earnestness and self-assurance. He studied previous deals and met with Middle East experts and former negotiators—Miller at the Carnegie Endowment, Clifford May, the head of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, and several others. All describe him as respectful personally but dismissive of previous efforts to resolve the conflict. "A lot of the former peace negotiators told me the goal is to give hope, it's not to actually make a deal," Kushner says. "I said the goal is to make a deal and finish this thing." He did not want to go down the road of past negotiations only to fail again. (Robert Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy retorted, "Oh, so you want to fail in a whole different way!" Kushner, he says, laughed.)

Kushner also insisted he wasn't going to be guided by "the history of the conflict, and the history of the peace process—those are traps." To which Miller replies, "But the history is the conflict."

Kushner did have one thing going for him. Anyone in the Israeli government or the Palestinian Authority knew that when you were talking to Kushner, you were talking to Trump. "That is how it was for Baker, when he was Secretary of State under Bush 41," says Miller, who worked for Baker. "There was no daylight."

Kushner's problem was the plan itself. It did put forth a two-state solution. But it required the Palestinians to forgo control over exit and entry into the proposed new state, and allow Israel to oversee its internal security. "In other words, it takes away the most basic functions of a nation-state," Satloff says. Kushner coupled that with economic incentives for the Palestinian Authority that shrank over time. To Satloff, this was Kushner's real estate background poking through. "It was like a landlord trying to entice a tenant to get out of a building because he wants to put up condominiums: You give him 25 cents on the dollar now if he takes the deal, but if he waits two weeks he only gets 10 cents."

The deal went nowhere after it was unveiled, but Kushner is unapologetic. "Does it make Israel more secure? Yes. Does it lead to Palestinians living a

better life? Yes," he says. He blames the Palestinians for the plan going nowhere. "They say they want to compromise, but they are never willing to get into the technical discussions that are going to lead somewhere." He says much of the rest of the Arab world is now fed up with the Palestinian Authority.

Along with others in Washington, Miller believes that domestic political considerations—"Trump's desire to be the most pro-Israel president in history"—shaped the plan. The president had already fulfilled a campaign promise by moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. A lopsided deal favoring Israel would solidify his support among evangelical Christians and conservative Jews. Kushner denies politics drove the peace effort, but concedes, "the president's political base is thrilled with how we've handled this so far."



Donald Trump's first presidential trip abroad. Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner arrive to attend the presentation of the Order of Abdulaziz al-Saud medal at the Saudi Royal Court in Riyadh on May 20, 2017.

MANDEL NGAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Prince

Kushner is not wrong to suggest that much of the Middle East is exasperated with Palestinian leadership. The Trump administration, including Kushner, has

encouraged the Gulf states to move closer to Israel. Kushner has been involved in the reorientation of U.S. policy away from Iran and back toward traditional allies, most importantly Saudi Arabia. This wasn't his baby, the way criminal justice reform was. Other key members of the administration—then National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and Defense Secretary James Mattis—broadly supported the policy, and so have their successors. But Kushner was important, not least because of his relationship with Mohammed bin Salman, aka MBS, the controversial Crown Prince and de facto ruler of the House of Saud. And when that relationship proved troublesome, Kushner stood by the Saudi prince.

Riyadh was delighted by Trump's campaign promise to junk Obama's nuclear deal with Iran and urged an early meeting after the inauguration.

Kushner had never met the Crown Prince, but the two began communicating; Trump's visit in May 2017 was his first overseas trip as president. During their meetings, MBS told Kushner what the son-in-law would later relay to the president: "he had very ambitious goals," Kushner says. "He wanted to modernize his society. But he said he needed space and time. 'Let me do this in my time.'" Trump's circle viewed the 2017 Saudi trip as a triumph, the elation captured by a photo of Kushner high-fiving McMaster after a lavish lunch with the Saudi delegation..

But in October of the following year, Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, a vocal critic of the Saudi monarchy, was killed and dismembered in the country's Istanbul embassy. It was a high profile—and brutal—assassination; the CIA told the White House that it believed MBS had signed off on it, and the administration was taking serious heat over the murder. But Kushner and other advisers including Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged Trump to hang tough rather than alienate Riyadh while they were breaking off the Iran deal.

Kushner still defends MBS—and his own decision to support him. He says MBS has cleaned out some of the most radical Imams in the mosques and tamed the notorious religious police. The new foreign policy maven speaks like a hardened "realist" when talking about MBS and the Saudis. If Team Trump had to bear some unpleasantness in the pursuit of broader goals with the Saudis, so be it. "There have been a couple of missteps," he says, "but they've been a very good ally."

Kushner's close relationship with MBS proved useful earlier this year. Moscow and Riyadh were engaged in a ruinous oil price war, wreaking havoc on the U.S. energy sector. Demand was plummeting because of the COVID-induced economic coma. But the two largest foreign producers, the Saudis and the Russians, were not cutting production in order to boost prices. Instead, they were increasing the flow. Kushner called MBS several times asking the Saudis to halt. He and Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette also lobbied Moscow. Finally, the two superpowers called a truce. Critics say the administration should have pressured the Saudis earlier and harder. Kushner deflects the criticism. "Ultimately, we got it done," he says. "That's what matters."



President Donald Trump holds a Bible while visiting St. John's Church across from the White House after the area was cleared of people protesting the death of George Floyd June 1, 2020, in Washington, DC. President Donald Trump was due to make a televised address to the nation on Monday after days of anti-racism protests against police brutality that have erupted into violence.

PHOTO BY BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/GETTY

Presidential Politics

The campaign could be the loyal son in law's final task. Joe Biden has been pulling ahead, COVID -19 cases are soaring, and Republicans around the

country are increasingly nervous about the race.

If Kushner himself is nervous, he doesn't let on publicly. But the demotion of campaign manager Parscale in favor of Bill Stepien, the former White House political director and Parscale's deputy, was a bow to reality. Parscale had been a Kushner ally but campaign insiders say his fate was sealed by the horrible optics of the Tulsa rally. Now, Kushner aides say he attends a daily morning meeting with Trump and the campaign's high command. He is trying to get the president to focus more consistently on the campaign, a senior administration official says.

As recently as mid-June, Kushner was praising the campaign team he helped build. He had brought back Jason Miller and Brian Jack, two veterans of the 2016 run. (Miller focuses on campaign strategy, while Jack runs the White House's office of political affairs.) The campaign, he boasts, has a \$60 million, state-of-the-art data operation, which Parscale, who ran digital and data strategy in the 2016 campaign, will continue to oversee. "We're message-testing what will make [voters] like Trump more, and [Joe] Biden less. We have a big war chest, our operation is clicking. We have an eternity of time." Kushner recently signed off on a tough new ad tying Biden to the rise in crime in cities like Seattle, Minneapolis and New York in the wake of the George Floyd murder.

The public polls that show the president trailing badly are "all b.s.," Kushner says. "I'm not a political strategist but I know what the message is: He may not be the politically correct one, but he gets things done." The fact that Trump has not yet laid out a vision for a second term also doesn't faze Kushner. "The strategy side matters more in the last 90 days," he says.

To anxious Republicans, Kushner's assessment sounds divorced from an increasingly grim reality. The "eternity of time" is slipping away, as Trump's poll numbers drop. He still out polls Biden on the economy, albeit barely. But the virus is killing him politically. A Washington Post-ABC News poll published July 18 showed only 38 percent of respondents supported his handling of the pandemic, while 60 percent disapproved. Any doubts that Kushner may have, aren't shared with a reporter. But it's unclear how he can help overcome the hardening perception that Trump's handling of the pandemic has been a disaster.

Dutiful and discreet, Jared Kushner has done whatever his father-in-law has asked of him. He wants to see his father-in-law re-elected, and hopes his work helps. But neither Kushner nor anyone else around the president can undo the damage from the early, shambolic response to the virus, which helped produce a summer of rising cases and renewed economic shutdowns.

Nor does he control Trump's Twitter feed, which continues to be a source of self-inflicted wounds. The White House, Kushner included, loved Trump's July 3rd speech at Mt. Rushmore and the patriotic themes it struck. But Trump then stepped all over the message by tweeting criticism of NASCAR for banning the Confederate flag, and of Bubba Wallace, the African American driver who Trump said had taken part in a "hoax" regarding the noose found in his team's garage. It was as tone deaf as anything Trump has said as president, and at a time when millions of Americans are confronting racial injustice.

It's lucky for Kushner that he likes hard challenges. Getting Donald Trump re-elected may not be as tough as achieving Mideast peace. But it's close.

Hollywood vs. China

07.31-08.07.2020
New York Times

JARED
KUSHNER
**TALKS
CANDIDLY**
ABOUT
HIS ROLE IN
TRUMP'S
WHITE HOUSE

The **Utility** Player

In a series of revealing interviews, Jared Kushner explains how he operates in the Trump White House and why the president—his father-in-law and boss—trusts him.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY GLUEKIT; KUSHNER BY ZACH GIBSON/GETTY

Correction July 20, 2020, 11:58 a.m. ET: A quote from Jared Kushner about construction of the border wall was corrected to say that more than 450 miles will be built by the end of the year.

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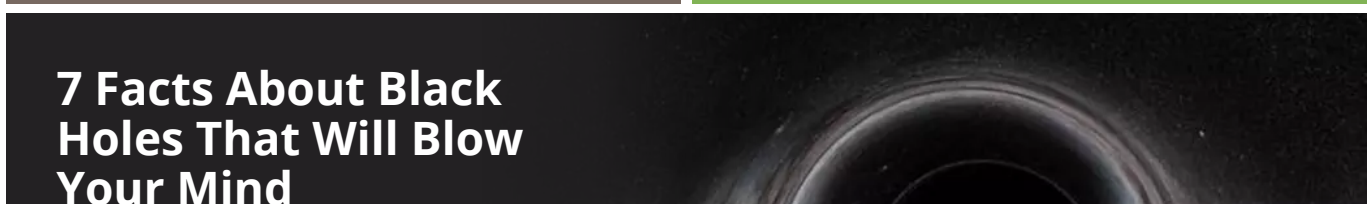
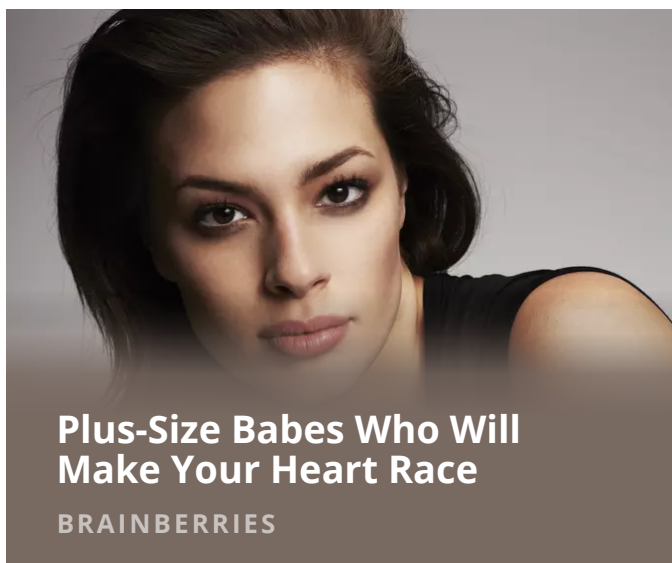


EXHIBIT 11

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

How Jared Kushner forged a bond with the Saudi crown prince

By **Carol D. Leonnig, Shane Harris, Josh Dawsey and Greg Jaffe**

March 19, 2018 at 6:10 p.m. CDT

One year ago, two young princes began to forge a friendship at a lunch meeting in the White House's regal State Dining Room.

A snowstorm had kept away President Trump's scheduled guest that day, German Chancellor Angela Merkel — giving the president and his advisers, including son-in-law Jared Kushner, more time to spend with the visiting son of Saudi King Salman.

Kushner and Prince Mohammed bin Salman, both in their 30s, had met before, but this would be their first formal sit-down since Trump's inauguration, and a bond developed between the two men, according to people familiar with their relationship who spoke on the condition of anonymity to speak candidly.

As their countries' chief negotiators on Israeli-Palestinian peace, Kushner and the Saudi prince were both seeking to prove their worth on the international stage. They consulted with one another frequently in private calls over the following months, according to people with knowledge of their communications. Kushner successfully pushed the president to make Saudi Arabia his first foreign visit last spring, against objections from other senior administration officials, and then personally visited Mohammed again last fall in Riyadh, the Saudi capital.

Kushner is now set to play a major role hosting the crown prince as he arrives in Washington Monday to kick off a tour of United States. In addition to official meetings, he is scheduled to attend several dinners with Mohammed, along with other U.S. and Saudi officials.

In courting the Saudi prince, Kushner has displayed an unorthodox approach to diplomacy that has unsettled national security and intelligence officials — relying on personal relationships instead of standard government channels to tackle complex problems, according to multiple people with knowledge of Kushner's role.

Some officials fear the president's son-in-law has been freelancing foreign policy in one of the most volatile regions in the world. There is particular wariness about Kushner's embrace of Mohammed, now the Saudi crown prince, who has earned praise in the West for his moves toward modernity but also criticism for his government's arrests of rivals and critics.

Kushner declined to comment.

Allies and aides described his personal outreach to Mohammed as unconventional yet effective, arguing that he built a valuable relationship with an ascendant leader whom he believes will help achieve stability in the Middle East. The two

have a shared interest in testing novel approaches, according to people who know them.

While Kushner's early contacts with foreign officials may have been freewheeling, he now more routinely briefs other top officials on his communications, supporters said.

"The lack of leaks from or about Mr. Kushner's work — whether as part of the Middle East team, Mexico relations or prison reform — is a testament to the fact that he cares about results and not publicity and that he understands how to keep and share information with those in the Administration who should have it," Peter Mirijanian, a spokesman for Kushner's attorney Abbe Lowell, said in a statement.

"It appears those who feel left out are the ones who become sources for false information," he added. "Mr. Kushner follows all appropriate internal communications protocols and procedures, and the actions he takes are known by, coordinated with and reported to others who should be involved."

A senior Saudi official said that the king and crown prince have conferred by phone with both Trump and Kushner as "events require" and that the ambassador stays in close contact with the other U.S. officials in the State Department and national security establishment to continue the "robust partnership" between the two countries.

"President Trump has given Mr. Kushner the important task of overseeing the peace process, and this has been the primary subject of discussion between Mr. Kushner and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince," the official said in a statement.

Kushner's unique role was evident a few weeks ago when White House Chief of Staff John F. Kelly asked a question in an intelligence briefing about a sensitive policy matter related to Saudi Arabia in preparation for the crown prince's visit.

In response, intelligence briefers told him that virtually all of the conversations that U.S. officials had with the Saudis on the matter had been between Kushner and Mohammed, according to several people familiar with the episode.

Through a spokesman, Kelly declined to comment.

Kushner and his staff have often arranged private conversations with the Saudi crown prince and other senior leaders in foreign countries that were not always coordinated with national security or diplomatic officials, according to multiple officials familiar with his activities.

The one-on-one communications worry some national security officials, in part because Kushner operated for the last year with an interim top-security security clearance. The Washington Post reported in February that Kushner's contacts with certain foreign government officials had contributed to his inability so far to obtain a permanent security clearance.

With Kushner's background investigation still pending, Kelly recently revoked his access to the most highly sensitive government secrets.

Recently ousted Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and national security adviser H.R. McMaster expressed early concern that Kushner was freelancing U.S. foreign policy and might make naive mistakes, according to people familiar with their reactions.

At times, senior officials would learn about Kushner's calls after the fact, rather than being briefed beforehand, the people said. In some cases, McMaster was concerned there were no official records kept of what was said on the calls.

Tillerson was even more aggrieved, they said, once remarking to staff: "Who is secretary of state here?"

A State Department spokesman did not respond to requests for comment.

In a statement, McMaster said he values Kushner's contribution.

"Jared Kushner and I share a close working relationship and carefully coordinate outreach to foreign leaders," McMaster said. "Jared's relationships have proven invaluable to advancing the President's agenda in many of the world's vital regions."

Steven Hall, a former senior CIA official, said most administrations have sought to bring the experience of the national security establishment and intelligence operations to bear on interactions with foreign leaders. Kushner's style fits a Trump administration pattern of "generally taking a new approach to past, proven practice," he said.

"There is a danger if you do indeed stovepipe and don't share information across the government. Bad things could happen," Hall said.

One of Kushner's biggest impacts has been to persuade Trump to make Saudi Arabia his first destination for a foreign state trip as president. Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis opposed the move, according to multiple officials. Kushner was wary of letting others in the agencies know what he was doing for fear opponents would make his plans public, the people said.

Mattis urged delaying the trip a year, saying a Riyadh visit would send the wrong signal to America's more democratic allies around the world. Mattis was also skeptical of Saudi promises to help counter Iranian influence and destroy ISIS, U.S. officials said.

Trump settled the dispute, telling Kushner they would go if the Saudis promised to make U.S. weapons purchases and increase counterterrorism efforts.

Trump ultimately deemed the visit a major success and basked in the VIP treatment he received. The Saudis hosted the Trumps and Kushners at the family's royal palace, ferried them around in golf carts and celebrated Trump with a multimillion-dollar gala in his honor, complete with a thronelike seat for the president.

Trump boasted that the summit led Saudis to purchase \$110 billion in American arms sales and other investments, creating hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs. But many of the weapon purchases and investment pledges had been on the books for more than a year and most of the deals have not progressed since Trump's visit, U.S. officials acknowledged.

Some intelligence and national security officials worry that the Saudi crown prince's argument about how to resolve conflict in the Middle East — that his country is the chief hope for peace and Iran is the root of all strife — is too simplistic. They fear his appeal has gained traction with White House officials who have little experience with the region's politics.

In June, intelligence fears about the situation in Saudi Arabia rose when Mohammed unseated his cousin and the heir apparent, Mohammed bin Nayef, a longtime U.S. ally against terrorism. Bin Nayef had become a target of terrorism as a result of helping America: In 2009, bin Nayef was injured when an al-Qaeda suicide bomber blew himself up near the

Bin Nayef “was the closest thing Saudi Arabia had to a genuine hero in this century”, said Bruce Riedel, who served more than 30 years in the CIA. He said Mohammed’s elevation had removed from power “one of the preeminent counterterrorists today.”

In late October, some intelligence officials were caught off guard when Kushner flew on a secretive trip to Riyadh for private meetings with the crown prince. Most people in the White House were kept out of the loop about the trip and its purpose, according to two senior officials.

A senior administration official said the trip was coordinated through the White House’s National Security Council.

After the trip, the administration said the purpose of Kushner’s trip was to discuss a Middle East peace plan, but declined to say with whom he met.

Kushner has since told aides he and the prince met alone to “brainstorm” strategies, according to people familiar with the discussions. But intelligence officials were troubled by a lack of information about the topics discussed, the people said.

Days after Kushner’s visit, Mohammed stunned the region by putting many of his rivals and Saudi business executives under house arrest. The crown prince described the crackdown as part of an anti-corruption effort, but the move was criticized by human rights groups and Middle East experts as the prince’s effort to consolidate his power over the country.

One of those arrested was a longtime U.S. ally in the country, billionaire investor Prince Alwaleed bin Talal. The prince had publicly attacked Trump as a “disgrace” to America during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Trump followed the crackdown with a public tweet in support of Mohammed’s moves.

“I have great confidence in King Salman and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, they know exactly what they are doing . . . ,” Trump wrote. “Some of those they are harshly treating have been ‘milking’ their country for years!”

As Mohammed kicks off his U.S. tour, Kushner is continuing his efforts to work with the crown prince and others to - develop an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal, associates said.

In the end, the president’s son-in-law emphasized to aides last week, he hopes to be judged not on the process, but on the results.

Robert Costa, Karen DeYoung, Ellen Nakashima, Ashley Parker and Julie Tate contributed to this report.

EXHIBIT 12

The Guardian



This article is more than **1 year old**

Jared Kushner using WhatsApp to speak to foreign contacts, top Democrat says

Elijah Cummings, chair of the House oversight committee, also alleges Ivanka Trump is not preserving all her official emails

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Erin Durkin *in New York*

Thu 21 Mar 2019 15.52 EDT

Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's senior adviser and son-in-law, uses the online messaging service WhatsApp for official business - including communication with foreign contacts, according to a new letter from congressional investigators.

The letter, sent to the White House by the House oversight committee chairman, Elijah Cummings, on Thursday, also says Ivanka Trump, Kushner's wife and the president's daughter, is not preserving all of her official emails, as required by federal law.

The new disclosures came in the letter to the White House counsel Pat Cipollone, and demands documents related to the use of personal email and messaging accounts by White House aides.

“The White House’s failure to provide documents and information is obstructing the committee’s investigation into allegations of violations of federal records laws by White House officials,” Cummings, the Maryland Democrat, wrote.

The Presidential Records Act prohibits senior White House officials from using non-official email or messaging accounts for government business, unless they send copies of the messages to their official accounts.

Abbe Lowell, a lawyer for Kushner and Ivanka Trump, told the committee in December that Kushner was still using WhatsApp as part of his official duties at the White House, including for communications with people outside the United States.

Kushner is the Trump administration’s point man on Middle East policy. CNN reported last year he was communicating on WhatsApp with the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

Lowell said that Kushner complied with the records law by taking screenshots of his messages in the app and sending them to his White House email, according to the letter. But he could not tell investigators whether Kushner had sent classified information through WhatsApp, saying: “That’s above my pay grade.”

Ivanka Trump has continued to receive email related to official business on her personal email account, and does not forward a message to her official account unless she replies to it, Lowell told the committee.

“This would appear to violate the Presidential Records Act,” Cummings wrote.

Other White House officials have also used personal email for official business, the letter says.

KT McFarland, when she was deputy national security adviser, used her personal AOL account, according to a document cited by the committee.

Trump’s former chief strategist Steve Bannon also received documents related to an effort to transfer nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia at a personal email address, the letter says.

Cummings said that when it was under Republican control in March 2017, his committee started investigating whether White House officials were using personal email and messaging accounts to conduct official business.

He said that Trump’s White House had so far failed to provide documents and information, and demanded that they turn over the information by 4 April. He asked for a list of all White House officials who have used personal email for official business.

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EXHIBIT 13

Global Opinions

The Saudi crown prince just made a very risky power play

Opinion by [David Ignatius](#)

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman says he's cracking down on corruption. But the [sweeping arrests](#) of cabinet ministers and senior princes Saturday night looked to many astonished Arab observers like a bold but risky consolidation of power.

MBS, as the headstrong 32-year-old ruler is known, struck at some of the kingdom's most prominent business and political names in a new bid to gain political control and drive change in the oil kingdom. [By the count](#) of the Saudi-owned al-Arabiya news channel, the arrests included 11 princes, four ministers and several dozen others.

"He's creating a new Saudi Arabia," said one Saudi business leader contacted Sunday. He noted that the anti-corruption campaign follows other aggressive but controversial moves, including a royal decree [allowing women to drive](#) and [limits on the religious police](#).

"This is very risky," the business leader said, because MBS is now challenging senior princes and religious conservatives simultaneously. The executive, who strongly supports MBS's liberalization efforts, worried that "he's fighting too many wars at once."

The list of arrestees includes Prince Miteb bin Abdullah, the son of the previous king and the head of the Saudi national guard, traditionally a locus of tribal power. "The national guard was part of the balance among the royal family. He's taken that balance out," the Saudi executive noted. "He's the goliath who can fight it all."

MBS appears to be deliberately dismantling the traditional governance system in Saudi Arabia, which involved a slow, sometimes sclerotic process of consensus within the royal family. The young prince has instead seized executive power and wielded it aggressively to push his agenda.

The forward-leaning face of this change process was on display a week ago, when MBS [hosted](#) a gathering of technology and business leaders from around the world. Saturday night's arrests showed the iron fist inside the futuristic velvet glove.

MBS described his campaign in a brief video clip circulating on Saudi social media. "I assure you anyone involved in corruption will not be spared, whether he's a prince or a minister, or anyone." The arrests were accompanied by a decree creating a "[supreme committee](#)" to investigate corruption. The committee has "the right to take any precautionary measures it sees fit," including seizing assets and banning travel.

MBS has chosen what's likely to be a popular target with younger Saudis. Corruption has enfeebled Saudi Arabia for generations, draining the royal treasury and impeding the modernization the crown prince says he wants. MBS is betting he can mobilize these younger Saudis, hungry for a new kingdom, against the older princes. He's hoping the religious establishment, too, will support a purge of the elite.

"He's closing the circle of people who can feed at the trough," said a Saudi political analyst contacted Sunday. "Instead of 10,000 stakeholders, there will now be just a few."

The roster of those arrested includes billionaire tycoons, such as Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, head of Kingdom Holding Co. and one of the most prominent Saudi global investors; Saleh Kamal and Waleed al-Ibrahim, co-founders of Middle East Broadcasting Corp., the region's first satellite channel; and Adel Fakieh, the minister of economy and planning, who until the putsch was one of MBS's key lieutenants in developing his reform program.

MBS has now shattered the leadership circle of the previous king, Abdullah, who died in 2015. In addition to Prince Miteb, MBS arrested Prince Turki bin Abdullah, another prominent son and former governor of Riyadh province. Also arrested was Khaled al-Tuwaijri, who as chief of Abdullah's royal court was a virtual prime minister. In June, MBS [toppled](#) the previous crown prince, Mohammed bin Nayef, clearing the way for him to eventually succeed his 81-year-old father, King Salman.

While accompanied by the rhetoric of reform, this weekend's purge resembles the approach of authoritarian regimes such as China. President Xi Jinping has used a similar anti-corruption theme to replace a generation of party and military leaders and to alter the collective leadership style adopted by recent Chinese rulers.

MBS is emboldened by strong support from President Trump and his inner circle, who see him as a kindred disrupter of the status quo — at once a wealthy tycoon and a populist insurgent. It was probably no accident that last month, Jared Kushner, Trump's senior adviser and son-in-law, [made a personal visit](#) to Riyadh. The two princes are said to have stayed up until nearly 4 a.m. several nights, swapping stories and planning strategy.

MBS would probably be flattered to be described as a Saudi Trump. But Xi and his anti-corruption power play may be the real role model.

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David Ignatius

David Ignatius writes a twice-a-week foreign affairs column for The Washington Post. His latest novel is “The Paladin.”

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